

GENERAL

OPERATION OVERFLIGHT: THE U-2 SPY PILOT TELLS HIS STORY FOR THE FIRST TIME, by Francis Gary Powers, with Curt Gentry (Holt, Rinehart & Winston). The decision to send a U-2 over Russia just before a summit conference was, the author believes, a bungle by American intelligence for which he was made, to a limited extent, a scapegoat. Previous overflights, he tells us, had revealed the striking growth of Russian missile capabilities. This discovery alone, Powers thinks, justified surveillance flights, since the United States had no other way of finding out whether the Russian arms effort was going into missiles or into manned bombers. But the U-2 was never conceived of as more than an interim device that would have to be abandoned when Russian missiles improved, and by the time Powers was shot down it was—or he thinks it should have been—evident that what happened to him was about ready to happen. And, he believes, President Eisenhower was never fully informed of the increasing risks of the U-2 flights he authorized. Neither Powers nor any other pilot had been given any instructions about what to do in case he was captured, so, Powers says, he evolved his own way of dealing with his predicament: he pretended to be an ignorant mercenary pilot, unable to give the Russians much information, though willing to do so to save his neck. This assumed character was accepted by the Russians and—this pains Powers terribly—by most Americans, some of whom thought he was being paid so much that he should have committed suicide. Powers describes himself as no mercenary but as a patriotic young man who loved flying; though no intellectual, he was no dope, either. The Russians never mistreated him, but he found his interrogations, trial, and imprisonment a severe ordeal. He was sustained by, among other things, a rosy view of his employer, the C.I.A., which turned to disenchantment after his exchange. His professional criticisms of the agency's professional performance are specific—he cannot understand, for

example, the agency's lack of interest in what he had learned about Russian interrogators and their intelligence-gathering techniques. His book is interesting all by itself, and it joins the roster of works that have been raising an exasperating problem: How can an open society cope with secret agencies, its own or anybody else's?

CIA 4.02 U-2

Soc. 4.01.2 Operation Overflight